

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

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AHQUBI CAMPGROUND RENOVATION CHANGED TO AFTER JULY 4

DES MOINES - After three years of delays, the campground at Lake Ahquabi State Park will be renovated starting after the July 4 holiday weekend. The long awaited renovation is just one of the many health and safety projects the Iowa Department of Natural Resource is working on in its state parks.

"The Ahquabi campground electrical system is 33 years old. Season after season it has been plagued with continual outages that require the breakers to be replaced weekly. At \$60 a pop, the cost adds up in a hurry," says Angela Corio, landscape architect with the DNR's state parks bureau. "These outages result in major inconveniences for campers including the loss of all of their food if park staff are not alerted right away. In addition, many of the pedestals are in poor condition due to damage from being hit and cannot be secured shut or water tight which is a safety issue."

Renovation plans include new primary electrical service to the campground and replacing all 30 amp pedestals with 50-amp service for a total of 85 electric sites. The sites will be larger, less crowded and surfaced with rock. There will be a net loss of some non-electric sites in order to accommodate the larger electric sites.

Camping at the park will be interrupted in July when the project begins and will continue in August. Why not wait until next year or this fall?

"Safety, economic and logistical reasons were a big factor," says Corio. "We need our summer staff to help with part of the construction project. There is also a

concern from previous years during tight state government budgets, that unspent funds have and can be rescinded."

Camping slows in July and August when the weather turns hot. Corio said the temporary interruption of camping at the park will be well worth the wait. "Campers are invited to enjoy the newly renovated campsites this fall," she said.

For more information, contact Corio at 515-281-4579.

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WEST NILE VIRUS CONFIRMED IN IOWA PHEASANTS

BOONE - A joint study by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine last fall found that nearly 20 percent of the rooster pheasants examined had been exposed to West Nile Virus at some point in their life. The study examined 80 hunter shot rooster pheasants from across Iowa.

Other studies on pheasants and closely related birds, like wild turkeys and quail, so far indicate the birds are highly resistant to the disease and that WNV is not through to be a threat to survival.

Dr. Eric Zhou and colleagues at ISU developed a test for WNV antibodies in pheasants. They then determined that 15 of 80 pheasants had been exposed to the virus, meaning that nearly 20 percent of the tested birds had contracted WNV at some time in their lives and had recovered. The antibodies to WNV develop after a pheasant has recovered and at this point they are no longer considered to be actively infected. The birds that tested positive for WNV antibodies were found in all regions of the state, indicating that most of Iowa's pheasant population has been exposed to WNV or soon will be.

It is not possible from this study to determine how many pheasants contracted the disease and died. WNV has been confirmed in 138 species of birds and some popular game animals like squirrels and deer.

What are the implications to pheasant hunters? Humans can contract WNV if bitten by an infected mosquito or through direct blood-to-blood contact with live virus from an infected animal. Does this mean that hunters or their dogs could get WNV from pheasants? The Centers for Disease Control found that pheasants are actively infected with WNV an average of only 2.7 days. Theoretically a hunter or dog could become infected if blood from an actively infected bird entered through a cut or break in the skin, but the chances are extremely low. This might happen while dressing an infected pheasant.

By the time Iowa's pheasant season opens in late October, however, the risk of encountering mosquitoes or an infected bird is normally low. In an unusually warm year at least some potential exists for infected birds to be present as late as Thanksgiving.

Concerned hunters can minimize the already low risk of getting WNV by wearing gloves while dressing pheasants or any other small game, big game, or waterfowl. Hunters who are concerned about their dog's health should contact their local veterinarian for guidance.

Properly cooking fish and game is always advised. Cooking the meat thoroughly will ensure the meat is safe to eat.

For more information on WNV visit the National Wildlife Health Center website at http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/research/west_nile/west_nile.html.

For more information, contact Todd Bogenschutz, DNR upland biologist, at 515-432-2823, or Dr. Zhou, College of Veterinary Medicine, ISU, at 515-294-4699.

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SPRING RAINS TRIGGER LATE SEASON MUSHROOM EXPLOSION

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

With its unique sponge-like appearance and distinctive delicate flavor, the morel mushroom is Iowa's most recognized and most sought after wild edible. For thousands of Iowans, mushroom hunting has become nothing less than a mandatory spring ritual. Unfortunately, this year's mushroom season could be best described as dry, windy, and downright pathetic. The pickings have been so slim in fact that many enthusiasts are calling it the worst season in a decade. At least until now.

Happily, the outlook changed dramatically this past weekend as a series of rapidly moving storm cells passed across the state, instantly transforming powdery dry woodlands into moist mushroom incubators. As the storms passed, the sun returned and statewide temperatures climbed into the lower to mid 80s. The muggy weather triggered an eleventh hour response that was more dramatic than mushroom hunters dared dream.

Within hours of receiving their first good drink of the spring, patches of late season morels began popping like kettle corn at a buckskinner's rendezvous. In almost less time than it takes to tell, the soft green hues of the forest floor became suddenly studded with the golden heads of newly emerging, natural taste treats.

The most prolific outbreaks occurred across the state's northern tiers of counties where spring conditions were less advanced than in the south. The moccasin telegraph went to work, and by Sunday afternoon the word was out. Traveling from as far away as Omaha and St. Paul, legions of morel enthusiasts regrouped and headed out for one last shot at the Iowa woodlands.

Not wanting to be left out of the action, I was soon picking my way among the familiar network of deer trails that run along either side of my favorite Clayton County ridge top. Located about six miles from Marquette, the ridge has been a good producer in the past -- but only if it receives a good supply of moisture. Hopefully, Saturday's rainfall would be enough to trigger some end of the season action.

I had only been in the woods for a few minutes when I made my first find, a stately group of four medium-sized morels. Several yards later, I discovered another batch containing six of their cousins. I had now gathered enough to fill the bottom of the skillet waiting in my truck. So far so good, I thought to myself.

Ten minutes farther down the ridge, I spotted the classic mushroom tree -- a dead elm about 15-inches or so in diameter, just beginning to shed its bark. Arriving at the tree I instantly realized that I'd hit the jackpot; a veritable mushroom garden. Standing in singles, pairs, and clusters, morels had popped up everywhere. As I began collecting, I had to be careful not to accidentally step on an unseen mushroom before it could be picked. The total yield for that single tree was 104 morels -- all yellows. Wandering on, I found a group of three, a single, and then another good batch containing around 40 yellows.

The most memorable event of the day came at three-thirty in the afternoon when I discovered a patch containing 14 newly emerged morels. What made this spot so exciting was the fact that a mature, Clayton County gobbler was brazenly sounding off just on the other side of some thick gooseberry growth. He was gobbling his brains out, and after I'd bagged the morels I just sat there to listen. I never did see that turkey, but at times he was certainly less than 50 yards distant -- so close that his gobbles seemed to shake the bushes. The bird wasn't having any luck attracting a hen, and the incessant gobbling went on until 5:51 p.m. In spite of a host of other bird sounds, the timber seemed depressingly silent after that tom finally shut up. As I walked back toward the truck, I wished I had thought to count the gobbles during that two and a half-hour timberfest.

Although I encountered more mushrooms on the way out, I didn't bother to disturb them. I already had all that I could carry -- or eat. The spores from the ones I didn't pick will provide seed for next year's crop. Scouring the slopes in search of wild mushrooms is always a good excuse for spending a relaxing afternoon in the Iowa woodlands.

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IOWA RIVER CORRIDOR BIRD CONSERVATION AREA DEDICATION

DES MOINES - A ceremony to dedicate the Iowa River corridor as a state and national Bird Conservation Area (BCA) will take place Tuesday, May 25, at 1:30 p.m. The event will be held one mile south of Belle Plaine (north of Iowa River bridge) on the east side of Hwy. 21 (just north of the city fire station).

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is hosting the event that will include brief presentations and unveiling of a special Bird Conservation Area sign, followed by a short car tour of the Iowa River corridor.

“Designating the Iowa River corridor as a Bird Conservation Area will provide important recognition of the value of this area to a host of resident and migratory bird species,” said Bruce Ehresman, biologist with the DNR’s wildlife diversity program. “The many habitat types within the river corridor provide essential food and shelter for rare or declining species like barn owls, northern harriers, sandhill cranes, and wood warblers.”

“The creation of Bird Conservation Areas in Iowa is a priority for DNR’s wildlife diversity program and is part of a larger international effort promoting assistance for birds with the greatest conservation need,” said Doug Harr, coordinator of the program.

The emphasis of the BCA program is encouraging habitat conservation at a large landscape level to establish stable or growing bird populations. Each BCA includes a combination of well-managed public and private lands, and the Iowa River corridor, with its existing large acreage of lands protected under public ownership and private conservation easements, represents the perfect candidate for Iowa’s next Bird Conservation Area. The 45-mile-long Iowa River corridor becomes Iowa’s sixth official Bird Conservation Area and the first exclusively along a river corridor.

The Iowa River corridor BCA is the result of state, federal, and county agencies, as well as private organizations and citizens, cooperating together to emphasize the importance of bird habitat. Some of these partners include the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and private landowners.

“This total effort represents a partnership that serves as an excellent example of ways to better conserve all natural resources in this unique landscape,” says Rick Trine, DNR wildlife biologist and Iowa River corridor manager.

Since bird watching is now among the nation’s fastest-growing outdoor activities, it is anticipated that this new BCA will attract bird enthusiasts from throughout the

region, Trine said. The result should be growth in the local tourism economy while also building sustainable local bird populations.

The public is welcome to attend this event and help celebrate the designation of this important Bird Conservation Area on the Iowa landscape. In the event of rain, the ceremony will be moved to the Belle Plaine Community Center, 1309 5th Ave.

For more information, contact Ehresman at (515) 432-2823, Harr at (515) 281-4815 or Trine at (641) 752-5521.

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[Hold the Wilkinson column until May 13]

SPRING CAMPING, FREE CAMPING

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Just another Monday morning for Greg and Joyce Lacher. The kids are off to school. Breakfast is about ready.

Well, not exactly *typical*. The campfire is still burning. Light rain is falling as they pack up after a weekend spent camping at Lake Macbride State Park. The heavy stuff would come later, but they would be home and dry by then.

“We try to get out, maybe 10, 15 trips a season,” estimates Lacher, of Shueyville. “We like to fish; the girls (14 and 12 years old) enjoy every aspect of camping. We came out to try out a boat and thought we’d take care of two things at once and get some camping in.”

As Greg oversaw the sausage frying, he packed away supplies in their car. Joyce was in their pop-up camper, collecting the weekend’s clothes and other stuff which ended up inside. Within a few minutes, they would be ready to head home and begin the workweek.

The heat and humidity of an Iowa summer are still to come. So are the crowds in many state parks. For now, though, dodging the raindrops on a spring morning was a small trade off to be outdoors.

“Spring campers like to get out ahead of the main recreation season,” offers Macbride park manager Ron Puettmann. “Temperatures are a little cooler. There are fewer people around. The crappies are biting right now. A lot of people are hunting for morels, too. It’s a great camping experience.”

Macbride offers modern camping (water, showers, flush toilets and optional electricity) on its north side. Primitive sites (no electricity or running water) are on the south side. On a typical spring weekend, Puettman says the 112 sites are fairly busy, but not packed. As the Lachers pulled out Monday morning, only the campground host remained on the north side. On the south side, a tent and two camping vehicles were still in place. And the tent was coming down. Not bad odds if you want to relax away from the crowd, or be the only one on the beach...or the boat ramp.

Those wide open spaces are fairly attractive to *weekday* campers, too...although the numbers pick up as the peak summer months arrive. All the features are open in most parks. There are just fewer people to enjoy them.

One of the challenges with camping is trying to juggle the 'be-three-places-at-once' family schedule. For the Lachers, it's just a change of headquarters. "One of us stays behind at the campsite. The other one runs around where ever the kids need to go," says Lacher. "We will switch off. Maybe I'll drop them off and (Joyce) will pick them up. We went our separate ways for the better part of (Sunday), but ended up enjoying the camping last night."

There are other adjustments, too. They are now on their second tow-behind camper: a step up from the tents of their early days. "We realized the ground wasn't getting any softer and we were getting older. We decided to go to a camper," Lacher concedes.

Free Camping Weekend Approaches

Camping is free at 52 state parks, recreation areas and forests this weekend. Iowa residents can enjoy free camping and get involved in interpretative activities May 14-16; part of the state parks' Free Camping Weekend.

Lake Macbride State Park is used to weekend crowds. Free Camping weekend will be no exception, weather permitting. "We are usually pretty busy. It's still early in the season, though, to say ahead of time that we will be full," cautions park manager Ron Puettmann.

"Some of our best kept secrets are the out-of-the-way parks. This offers a great reason to visit a new park," suggests Sherry Arntzen, with the Department of Natural Resources state parks bureau. All campsites and additional hook-ups are included free of charge. If the weather forecast is good, many of the popular park campgrounds will fill quickly. Arntzen suggests campers call ahead, to ensure that sites are available. Camping in state parks is first-come, first-served. Reservations are not accepted. Campers should register as usual, except for inserting payment in the envelopes.

Macbride will feature a garlic mustard pull on Saturday morning. Volunteers should meet at the registration board, just inside the south campground. "Garlic mustard is a nuisance plant species, especially in eastern and northeastern Iowa parks," explains Puettmann. Garbage bags and gloves will be provided.

Because of construction projects, several DNR areas are excluded from the Free Camping weekend. They include Nine Eagles, Pine Lake and Springbrook. For a complete list of state parks, recreation areas and forests and other information about free camping weekend, visit the state park website at www.exploreiowaparks

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of May 11, 2004

www.iowadnr.com

FOR CURRENT INFORMATION ON FISHING CONDITIONS FOR YOUR LAKE OR AREA, CONTACT THE OFFICE IN THAT DISTRICT. PHONE NUMBERS ARE LISTED WITH EACH DISTRICT REPORT.

Northwest

Muskie season is closed until May 20 on Spirit Lake, East Okoboji and West Okoboji lakes in Dickinson County.

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing continues to be good with most anglers catching some legal sized fish. Anglers are having luck drifting with live bait (minnows, leaches, night crawlers) and trolling crankbaits. Northern pike fishing is good with nice fish being caught trolling and casting. Bluegill and crappie fishing has been good in the Angler's Bay rushes. Use wax worms on small jigs for bluegills, and jigs tipped with minnows for crappies. A few bluegills and crappies are being caught at the North Grade. The Templar Lagoon crappie bite has slowed. Some large bullheads are being caught at the North Grade and Templar Park on worms.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Fishing is good for 13 to 18-inch walleye. From shore, cast twisters and minnow imitating lures. From a boat, troll crankbaits.

Lake Pahoja (Lyon): Catfishing is superb, mainly in the evening hours using traditional baits. Anglers - do not miss this excellent opportunity for quality channel catfish. Pahoja is a consistent producer for channel catfish and is an example that the caged catfish program can provide excellent angling year after year.

Five Island (Palo Alto): Walleye fishing continues to be good, with 18 to 20-inch fish common, and smaller fish mixed in the catch. Cast twisters and other traditional baits from boat or shore. The action has been consistent.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Water temperatures are in the mid to upper 50s. Walleye fishing has been slow. Yellow bass fishing is excellent around Dodge's Point, the island and the outlet. Use small jigs and minnows casting into the shoreline. Bullhead fishing is fair. Use night crawlers on the bottom at sunset and into the early evening hours.

Beeds Lake (Franklin): Crappies are being caught by drift fishing in 12 to 18 feet of water. Use small jigs and minnows. Most of the crappies are 7 to 9 inches.

Upper Pine/ Lower Pine (Hardin): Crappie fishing is good. Use minnows and small jigs around downed trees.

Rice Lake (Worth/Winnebago): Bullhead fishing is good using night crawlers on the windy shorelines.

Silver Lake (Worth): Bullhead fishing is good off the fishing jetty by the boat ramp. Use night crawlers on the bottom for best action.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Little River (Decatur): Crappies, 9 inches and larger, are starting to move into the shallow rocky areas in the early morning and late afternoon. Walleye are being caught while trolling the dam and large points in the lower portion of the lake. Catfish can be caught in the bays using liver or night crawlers.

Slip Bluff (Decatur): Bluegill and crappie are being caught around the tree piles during mid-day and off the rocks of the dam early and late in the day. Largemouth bass can be caught off the west shoreline structure.

West Lake Osceola (Clarke): Bluegill, crappie and largemouth bass fishing is excellent in the timbered coves and along the dam.

Grade Lake (Clarke): Bluegills are biting well on night crawlers and small jigs in the corners of the dam and along the east shore.

Three Mile (Union): Channel catfish are being caught at the upper end and in shallow bays on dip baits and liver. Walleye fishing is good over the rocky areas and trolling crankbaits around the larger points. Crappie and big bluegill are biting better and are moving into the shallow rocky areas in the early morning and late evening. Largemouth bass fishing is good all over the lake. Some muskie can be caught using crankbaits and spinners off the points and deeper shoreline during mid-day, or in the shallow bays early or late.

Twelve Mile (Union): Channel catfish is good in the upper ends using liver or night crawlers. Some walleye are being caught around the larger points.

Green Valley (Union): Crappies, 9 inches and larger, are starting to move over the rocks early and late in the day. Some really big bluegill can be caught in the shallows with night crawlers.

Icaria (Adams): Fishing is good for catfish using night crawlers and liver. Some walleye are being caught trolling the dam.

Binder (Adams): Largemouth bass fishing is good along the dam. Bluegill and crappie are starting to bite.

Old Corning (Adams): Some nice bluegills and crappies are biting along the dam and the east side.

Fogle Lake (Ringgold): Crappies can be caught early in the morning and late evening in the rocks off the dam and jetties.

Walnut Creek Marsh (Ringgold): Bluegill and crappie can be caught along the south shore and around the jetties.

Wilson Lake (Taylor): Crappies can be caught off the rocks along the dam early and late in the day.

Windmill Lake (Taylor): Bluegills can be caught with night crawlers in the shallows.

Big Creek (Polk): Crappie fishing is good using jigs with or without minnows. Walleye fishing has been good using live bait or spinner rigs with minnows and night crawlers, although most of the walleye are below the 15-inch minimum length limit.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill fishing has been good using jigs with worms. Some anglers are doing well with twister tails. Largemouth bass fishing has been good on top-water lures. Crappie fishing has been slow. The best fishing is early morning and late afternoon.

Beaver Lake (Dallas): Bluegill fishing has been good with small jigs and worms. Largemouth bass fishing has been excellent, although most fish are below the legal size limit.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Bluegill fishing has been good using worms and jigs. Largemouth bass fishing has been fair to good.

Don Williams (Boone): Crappie fishing is excellent using minnows and jigs in shallow water along shore. Crappies measuring 12 to 14 inches are not uncommon. Largemouth bass fishing is good using plugs. Channel catfish fishing is good using night crawlers and cut baits toward the north end of the lake.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Crappie fishing is good using night crawlers or minnows and jigs. Channel catfish fishing is fair using night crawlers. Largemouth bass fishing has been good from shore and boat using jigs and casting lures. Walleye fishing has also been fair using jigs and minnows.

Red Rock (Marion): Crappies, usually 10 inches or larger, and white bass have been hitting on jigs and minnows in the bays and coves. Channel catfish have been hitting in the bays and coves using night crawlers and worms.

Red Rock tailwater (Marion): Crappie and white bass fishing has been good in the tailwater using jigs and minnows. Some walleyes have been taken.

Roberts Creek (Marion): Crappie fishing has been good using jigs with minnows and/or night crawlers, and channel catfish have been hitting on night crawlers.

Easter Lake (Polk): Fishing is good for 8 to 9-inch crappie on jigs and minnows. A few walleye has also been reported with the majority caught while crappie fishing. Bluegill fishing has been good, but most fish were small.

Des Moines River (Polk): White bass fishing has been good; some walleye have been caught using jigs below the Scott Street Dam in Des Moines.

Saylorville Tailwater (Polk): White bass fishing has been excellent using white and chartreuse glitter twister tails, and sonar. Channel catfish fishing has been good using cut baits (shad).

Viking (Montgomery): Crappie and bluegill fishing is good using tube jigs along shoreline and around structure. Channel catfish fishing is fair using night crawlers or liver. Largemouth bass fishing has picked up in the evening around structure.

West Hacklebarney (Montgomery): Crappies and redear sunfish are being caught along the dam.

Cold Springs (Cass): Fishing is good for 7 to 8-inch crappies using jigs and minnows around structure near shore.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Fishing is good for channel catfish. A few crappies are being caught in the lagoon.

Orient (Adair): Fishing is good for 7-inch crappies using jigs and/or minnows along the dam, and the southeast shore near the water pump house. Anglers are also catching small bluegills.

Mormon Trail (Adair): Walleye fishing is good using crankbaits or jigs. Anglers are catching 7 to 9-inch crappies.

Nodaway Lake (Adair): Anglers are catching walleyes and crappies.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Fishing is excellent for 7-inch crappies using jigs and minnows around rocks and woody structure. Bass fishing is good.

DeSoto Bend (Harrison): Walleye and crappie fishing is excellent. Walleyes being harvested are 15 to 16 inches. Crappies being caught are 8 to 12 inches. Anglers also are catching good numbers of largemouth bass. Carp are being caught near shore.

Southwest Iowa Farm Ponds: Bluegill, crappie, and largemouth bass fishing is excellent. Reminder: ask permission and clean up your trash when fishing on private land.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: Fishing on the Mississippi River has been fair. The water temperature at Muscatine is 67 degrees and the river stage is 10.7 and is expected to remain stable over the next week. White bass fishing has been fair in the tailwaters and the mouths of the creeks on jigs and minnows. Fishing has been fair for walleye and sauger in the mouths of incoming rivers. Bluegill and crappie fishing has been fair on live and artificial baits. Anglers continue to catch catfish on shad, night crawlers, stink bait and minnows.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Bluegill and crappie fishing is fair to good, depending on the weather. Fishing along the trees in Sand Run seems to be working for some nice catches.

LAKE DARLING (WASHINGTON): THE SMALLER CRAPPIES HAVE MOVED INTO THE SHALLOWS TO SPAWN. THE BIGGER CRAPPIES ARE STILL A LITTLE DEEPER BUT ANGLERS CAN CATCH THE LARGER FISH USING A SMALL YELLOW OR CHARTREUSE JIG WORKED SLOWLY IN 3 TO 5 FEET OF WATER. **THERE WILL BE ROAD CONSTRUCTION GOING ON IN THE PARK, BUT THE MAIN BOAT RAMP WILL STILL BE OPEN.**

Lake Geode (Henry): Crappie fishing in the upper end of the lake is good along the old creek channel. The lake is very clear so use light line and be quiet. Bluegills are also being caught on warm afternoons in the shallow bays.

Lake Belva Deer (Keokuk): The lake is still about 3-1/2 feet low. Bluegill fishing is good. Use a very light jig tipped with a piece of worm and work it very slowly around the flooded trees in shallow water. Anglers are catching a few of the 10 to 12-inch bass. Try fishing plastic worms around the flooded timber for bass. Crappies were stocked into the lake two years ago and should start showing up in the creel this spring. Don't expect to fill any five-gallon buckets just yet.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been hitting in 6 to 10 feet of water using minnows and jigs.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Largemouth bass have been hitting on artificial lures. Bluegills have been biting on small jigs. Crappies have been hitting on jigs and minnows.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Crappies are starting to be caught from the shoreline out to 6 feet of water on plastic jigs. A few bluegills are being caught on small jigs tipped with wax worms.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Bluegills are hitting on small jigs in the shallows. Largemouth bass have been hitting on artificial lures and channel catfish on cut bait.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappies are starting to move in to the shoreline to spawn. Most of the crappies caught are 8 to 10 inches. Small jigs or minnows fished around shallow brush are working well. Shore fishing has been picking up at the causeway and off the fishing jetties. Some walleye are being caught and the largemouth bass fishing has been good.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Catfish continue to be caught on shad in the shallow flats. The Corps of Engineers has started raising the water level of the lake and should be to the summer pool elevation of 683 by the end of May.

Lake Iowa (Iowa): Crappie fishing has been good around the brush piles on small jigs or minnows.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): The crappie fishing has started to increase with the warm weather and the fish are starting to move into the shorelines. Small jigs or minnows have been working well.

IOWA RIVER (JOHNSON): CRAPPIE, WHITE BASS AND WALLEYE ARE BEING CAUGHT BELOW THE DAMS IN CORALVILLE AND IOWA CITY.

Skunk River (Washington and Henry): Catfishing is picking up but is still hit and miss until the weather settles down. Chicken liver and shad guts seem to be working the best.

English River (Washington): Catfishing is fair to good on night crawlers and minnows.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Water levels on the Mississippi River have risen the past few days and levels are expected to stay steady throughout the week in Pools 9-11. Water clarity is very good and the temperature is staying near 60 degrees. Several species of fish have been biting which makes it a good time to be on the river.

Largemouth bass are being caught in huge numbers in the tailwaters of both **Lock and Dam 9 and 10** using jigs and spinner baits. Bluegills are also biting in tailwaters and backwater areas. Try using a small jig tipped with a sliver or worm. Crappies will be moving into their spawning locations within the next few weeks. Often anglers need to try brushy areas in backwater lakes until the fish move in. They can literally start biting over night. On the Wisconsin side of the river, some good backwaters to try are the Black Hawk Bottoms in **Pool 9**, Bagley's and Jays Lake in **Pool 10**, and the Bertom Lake complex in **Pool 11**. On the Iowa side, try Minnesota Slough near New Albin in **Pool 9**, Harpers Slough and Mudhen Lake near Harpers Ferry in **Pool 10** and Swift Slough and Big Pond near Guttenberg in **Pool 11**. Remember the bag limits on bluegill, crappies and other panfish. This is a new regulation on the Mississippi River. Check the Iowa DNR regulation booklets for complete details. Along the side channel sloughs and wing dams, fresh water drum and walleye are all being taken in decent numbers in **Pools 9-11**.

Freshwater drum (sheepshead) may be the easiest fish to catch in the River and are a very tasty fish to eat especially at this time of year. A simple worm rig with a sliding sinker is all that you need for this feisty fish. Good areas for drum fishing include boat landings, such as the Army Road landing east of New Albin in **Pool 9**, off the new parking lot in Harpers Ferry leading into Harpers Slough (**Pool 10**), the Turkey River landing near the

mouth of the Turkey River east of Millville or off the county boat landing at Mud Lake just north of Dubuque (both in **Pool 11**). Walleyes are being taken on three-way swivels rigged with a half of a night crawler. Most of the fishing for walleye in **Pool 9-11** is on the front (upstream) side of the wing dams. You can either anchor upstream or, better yet, back troll these dams. The river is also rising at Bellevue and is 62 degrees. Freshwater drum fishing is excellent using night crawlers in **Pools 12-15**. Be ready to move until you find fish—try wing dams, tailwater areas and side sloughs. Channel catfish are being caught on night crawlers and cheese baits fished in the backwater areas, side sloughs and main channel. Crappie fishing is fair to good using jigs and/or minnows fished under a bobber in the backwater areas of **Pools 12-15**. Fish a variety of depths for crappie as some are hanging close to shore and some are still located in deeper water. Largemouth bass fishing is good in the backwater areas in **Pools 12-15** using spinner baits and worm rigs fished around woody structure. Smallmouth bass are hitting jigs and crankbaits fished along the rocks. Walleye fishing is fair on the wing dams in **Pools 12-15** using night crawlers, stick baits or crankbaits.

Turkey River (Fayette and Clayton): Smallmouth bass and walleye fishing is good on jigs.

Cedar River (Black Hawk): Smallmouth bass fishing is good between Gilbertville and La Porte City on jig and night crawler combinations. Fishing is fair for channel catfish on dead baits, night crawlers and stink baits.

West Fork Cedar River and Beaver Creek (Black Hawk): Fishing is good for smallmouth bass on jigs tipped with a night crawler. Channel catfish are biting on dead baits, stink baits and night crawlers.

Wapsipinicon River (Buchanan): Smallmouth bass fishing is good on jigs tipped with a minnow or night crawler. A lot of 8 to 10-inch smallies are being caught and released.

Maquoketa River (Delaware): White and yellow bass fishing is good on minnows below the City of Manchester and above Lake Delhi.

Lake Delhi (Delaware): Crappie fishing is good on jigs tipped with a small minnow or minnows fished under a slip bobber around docks or in rocky shorelines. Channel catfish are fair on cut baits, night crawlers or stink baits.

Volga Lake (Fayette): Fishing is excellent for 6 to 7-inch crappies using small jigs in the shallows. A few largemouth bass are also biting.

Lake Hendricks (Howard): Largemouth bass fishing is good on crankbaits and spinner baits.

Lake Meyer (Winnebago): Fishing is excellent for 6 to 7-inch bluegills using wax worms in the shallows. Crappies are also hitting wax worms.

Big Woods, Brinker (East Lake) and South Prairie (Black Hawk): Crappie fishing is excellent on jig and minnows or a minnow under a bobber fished along the shoreline or over brush piles. Bluegill fishing is fair in South Prairie Lake on wax worms fished next to structure.

Casey Lake (Tama) in Hickory Hills Park is good for bluegills on worms fished next to brush piles and structure.

Trout fishing is excellent. **Big Spring Pond**, next to the Turkey River on the Big Spring Hatchery property, offers families easy access to trout fishing. This pond was opened to public fishing in 2004 and the hatchery staff encourages families to bring

younger anglers to this area! Brook, brown and rainbow trout are stocked three times a week (including Saturdays). Plan a trip to tour the Big Spring Hatchery and fish the pond in the near future. There is also an active eagle's nest downstream of the state property. For current trout stocking information on other northeast Iowa trout streams, call the trout stocking hotline at 563-927-5736. You can also access the trout stocking calendar through the internet at www.iowadnr.com and go to the fish and fishing web pages.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.